

Unit 1 Slang: Talking Cool

TEACHER: OK, let's get started . . . Today we're going to be looking at a really interesting *phenomenon*, slang. We'll be looking at where slang comes from, who uses it and why. We all use it more often than you might think—every day of our lives, in fact. And we use it for a reason.

You know, most of us are fascinated with slang. We continually hear new words and phrases enter the language and replace old, and we see familiar words take on new meanings. We feel a need to keep in touch with these changes, to be aware of the latest street talk. Fact is, we love slang. But what is it exactly? What is slang? Anyone like to suggest a definition?

STUDENT 1: Isn't it basically kind of casual talk?

TEACHER: Can you say a bit more?

STUDENT 1: You know, the sort of words we use with friends . . . in relaxed situations.

TEACHER: Good. You're pretty much there with your idea of casual language. We can say that slang is language that's found only in the very informal speech of particular groups of people. It can help to identify the communities, the groups of people, who use it. And this brings me to the first important point of the lecture—why people use slang.

A lot of slang comes from not wanting to be understood by outsiders, people outside your circle. In other words, people *exploit* slang to give their group an identity, by making their language exclusive, or at least private. Through this private language, they can tease one another, enjoy shared experiences, and keep everyone else at a distance. All cultures contain groups or subcultures with different interests and *priorities*, and each group tries to establish a separate identity. They want people to know who they are, what they stand for—and slang helps to *construct* and cement that identity. We can say, then, that slang reflects the experiences, beliefs, and values of its speakers.

Now let's look more closely at this relationship between slang and community, slang and identity. A nice example of this is, uh, student language, sometimes called "youth-speak." Young people use a lot of slang, and many of the words they use are used by both sexes, often metaphorically rather than literally. That is to say, the conventional meaning of the words change. For example, words that have traditionally had strong negative literal meanings that are used as insults have taken on, uh, gentler, and in many cases even positive meanings in conversation. We'll look at some examples later.

Now, if you ask college students why they use slang, they'll tell you it's cool, and that's true in several different ways. First, it's cool because it's in style, in fashion. Using current slang shows that the speaker is in tune with the times . . . you know, that he or she knows what's in fashion and is part of that fashion.

Second, slang is cool in the sense of showing that the speaker is knowledgeable . . . the speaker is "in the know," the speaker knows when slang is acceptable. People don't use slang all the time, only in situations and with people who accept the use of slang—a point I'll return to later. Research tells us that although young people often deny that they use slang intentionally, in fact they clearly choose whether or not to use it depending on the situation they're in. As we've already said, slang's typically used in informal rather than formal settings, and this is certainly true among college students: They usually avoid using it in the classroom or a work environment, for example. Anyone like to suggest why?

STUDENT 1: People won't understand them.

STUDENT 2: Yeah, so it's like a waste of time.

TEACHER: Well, that may be true, but it's not the main reason. They *don't* use it simply because it could make them look bad. And everyone hates looking bad, right?

So, to review, we've said that students use slang only in certain situations. But they also only use it with certain people, usually friends. When they use slang, they are showing that they share social and emotional experiences—so slang reinforces their relationships. But . . . it also gives special meaning to what they say. For instance, to say "That party was the bomb" is more than merely saying it was a very good party. It shares an emotional experience that might otherwise take several sentences to explain. In other words, it's a kind of . . . shorthand.

The third and final way slang's cool is that it's fun; it's very creative in the same way that poetry is, and it's often humorous. In other words, it's a form of play, a way of entertaining.

So . . . uh, let me repeat: I've said that slang's cool for three reasons: One, it shows the user's fashionable and in tune with the times; two, it's a way of reinforcing relationships and communicating efficiently; and three, it's fun and entertaining. Got that?

All right then, let's now take a look at different kinds of slang, in particular three types of slang words: those that are currently most used, those that linger year after year, and those that have become unfashionable.

So . . . now what *is* the most used slang? Well, research tells us that over the past few years, in the number one position is "dope," which basically means very good, great,

excellent, attractive, or nice. So somebody might say, for example, that his friend's new motorbike is really dope; in other words, it's very good. Other words that feature in the top twenty include "chill out" (to calm down or relax), "the bomb" (meaning the best or most excellent), "whack" (which means bad, unfair, crazy, or foolish), and "dude" (meaning person—usually a man, actually). Any other examples? Yes?

STUDENT 1: Hella.

TEACHER: Meaning?

STUDENT 1: Very, a lot.

TEACHER: OK, yep. Luis?

STUDENT 3: "Kick it," which means, like, to hang out, uh, relax, you know, sit around doing nothing.

TEACHER: Right. And it's interesting, isn't it, how most slang terms indicate approval or disapproval; they show what we feel positive or negative about. So, like "dope" and "the bomb," we have "sweet," "phat"—spelled P-H-A-T, not F-A-T—"cool," and "tight"—all meaning good, excellent, nice, or attractive.

And then you have words like "bad" which really mean good; so "That new CD is bad" actually means it's good! So you see, slang does strange things with language. Like I said earlier, it's certainly creative. As a matter of fact, some slang words have many different meanings, sometimes as many as nine or ten. For instance, the word "trip" or "tripping" has various meanings, but they all reflect the idea of unusual, strange, or extreme. When a word's used a lot or has a number of different meanings like this, we sometimes say it "works hard." The word "trip," then, is a word that works hard.

Uh . . . now, the second type of slang consists of words that linger from *decade* to decade and never seem to go out of fashion—and these words also work hard, that is, they have a lot of meanings. A great example is the word *cool*—forever popular, it seems! Other terms in this category are "nerd," "cheesy," "chick," "the man," "toasted," "wasted," "what's up," "blow away," and "gross." And once again, most of these show approval or disapproval.

And . . . now, finally, there are slang terms that come and go; they disappear almost as quickly as they appear. Examples include "gimme five," "how's it hanging," and "core." Words like these often disappear because they're closely *associated with* famous personalities who similarly come and go—they're popular, in the spotlight for a while, and then seem almost to disappear. And when they disappear, the slang associated with them tends to disappear as well.

Now, today, public tolerance of slang is at an all-time high—just look at how widely it's used in newspapers. But how do college teachers and academics view slang? Well, some *persist with* the idea that its use will degrade . . . uh, you might even say "pollute" academic discourse. However, among themselves students *tolerate* words their teachers

might consider *taboo*. Students are actually very good at code-switching; that is, they're very good at using different styles or codes of communication in different situations. Do you agree? Do you use slang in your essays or when you speak with a teacher?

STUDENT 3: Personally I never use slang in essays. It just doesn't feel right. It's true, you know, most students know when to use slang, and when not to.

STUDENT 2: I agree. I sometimes use it with teachers, though; it just depends on who the teacher is.

TEACHER: Why, I imagine most people do the same. Here's something you may find surprising: A recent study on student conversation suggests that students don't in fact use slang that often but instead they choose more ordinary *colloquial* vocabulary.

OK, to finish up, now let me say something about the history of slang. Many years ago, slang was closely associated with underground, criminal organizations, groups that *deviate* from *mainstream* society . . . uh . . . with notions of outcasts and socially unacceptable behaviors. A look back in time shows, for example, that in the seventeenth century more than twenty words were used to refer to vagrants, that is, to someone who has no home or job. Today, of course, these associations are much weaker and slang's used much more widely. As underground culture has become more mainstream, there's not the same need for the kind of secret code that slang offered. Today, most of us use slang and aren't ashamed of using it. It may still have negative connotations, but like it or not it's here to stay, and increasingly it's become the subject of serious academic study. And why not? As I've tried to show, it's a fascinating social as well as linguistic phenomenon. So, any questions? . . .

Unit 2 Murphy's Law

TEACHER: Good afternoon, everyone. More than 200 years ago, the Scottish poet Robert Burns said that "the best laid plans of mice and men often go awry." I'm sure we all have firsthand experience with what Burns means; no matter how carefully we plan a project and no matter how carefully we try to, uh, *anticipate* problems, we're likely to, uh, *encounter* something unexpected and unwelcome that will throw our plan off course.

Well, class today we'll be looking at how plans can go right or wrong . . . and, uh, how we can make sense of this. Are you all familiar with Murphy's Law? Well, according to Murphy's Law, anything that can go wrong will go wrong. So we'll be looking at everyday examples of Murphy's Law—uh, things like why toast falls buttered-side down, why it always seems like we choose slow lines at the supermarket, and why it is so difficult to win when we gamble.

As you may know, we now have many different versions of Murphy's Law, and today I'd like to look at the science behind three of them. I'll try to show you that some things

which have happened to you, and which you may have thought were simply bad luck, had nothing to do with luck at all. What I'm saying is that there are some very good scientific reasons for many of the things that happen to us, and we're not victims of bad luck as often as we might think. When we consider some basic science and *probability theory*, we can more clearly understand why some "bad" things happen the way they do.

All right. Let's begin with a very commonplace situation. Let's say you've just gotten up. You're still sleepy, and you make your way to the breakfast table. In your half-awake state, you accidentally hit your piece of toast, which has butter on one side. The toast begins to fall to the floor. Now what are the chances that you'll be lucky and the toast will land buttered-side up? Well, the toast has only two sides, so most people think that the answer is fifty-fifty. Fifty percent. Right? Do you think that there's a 50 percent chance that the toast will land with the buttered-side up?

STUDENT 1: Well, this sounds like a trick question, but, uh, yeah. Logically, 50 percent sounds about right.

TEACHER: Yes, 50 percent does *seem* right, but, in this case, Murphy's Law of Falling Toast says: "Toast which falls from a table will land buttered-side down." Actually, the probability of this happening is extremely high. It's close to 100 percent. Now, here's why. When something like a piece of toast falls from a table, its behavior is not *random*. The rate of spin is controlled by the laws of physics. This is the problem. The rate of spin, that is, how fast the toast spins, is too low for the toast to make a complete *revolution*. It's too slow to turn completely around and hit the floor buttered-side up. The rate of spin is determined by the force of gravity. So in a very real sense, the laws of physics, and specifically the rate of spin, make sure that our toast lands buttered-side down almost all the time. So the point is that simple probabilities—for example, the probability that toast has a fifty-fifty chance of landing buttered-side up—can be greatly affected by other more *fundamental* factors, such as the laws of physics. So, in this case, we believe that we have bad luck because we don't understand that the natural laws of physics are in effect. The toast *should* land buttered-side down. OK? Let's look at the next point.

Now we come to one of my most frustrating situations in life—the supermarket line. In this case, Murphy's Law of Supermarket Lines says: "The line next to you will move faster than yours." Now everybody wants to get into the fastest line when they go to the supermarket, right? OK, so let's say that you're at your local supermarket and there are five lines, but each of the five lines looks pretty much equal in length. Now, of course, you want to try to anticipate which one of the five lines will move the fastest. Well, this is where simple probability theory enters the picture. The chances that you have chosen the fastest of the five lines is one divided by the number of lines, which is five in this case. So mathematically, the formula is one divided by N where N is the total number of lines. So in this example, one divided by five gives us what?

STUDENT 2: One divided by five is one-fifth or . . . uh . . . 20 percent.

TEACHER: Right. Twenty percent. There's only a 20 percent chance that we have chosen the fastest of the five lines. Now even if we reduce that to three lines, our line and the lines on each side of us, the chances we've chosen the fastest line are still only what?

STUDENT 2: Uh, 33 percent. One out of three.

TEACHER: Sure. One divided by three is 33 percent, so it's not just your imagination that one line near you almost always moves faster than yours. Simple probability theory shows that the odds are against you. If there are very many lines, the chances that you'll choose the fastest one is quite low. So, you see, it has little to do with luck, but we *perceive* that it does.

All right. Now let's look at a final situation that shows how we commonly misunderstand the laws of probability. We've come to Murphy's Law of Gambling that says simply: "You will lose." Now in the case of the supermarket lines that we've just talked about, probability theory applied very nicely. And actually, as we go through life, most things are fairly predictable because they follow the basic laws of probability. Weather is an example. Let's say that it's been raining for a week, and a friend says to you "I think it's going to be sunny tomorrow." Is that an unreasonable statement? Well, no. Clouds move, and they are of limited size, so if it's been raining for a week, it's likely that the rain and clouds will end soon. In other words, the next sunny day is more likely to occur after the seventh day of rain than after the first, because the storm front has what is called a *life history*. Now this is important, so let me explain that term. Events with a life history have changing probabilities of certain events occurring over time. For instance, uh, if you plant flower seeds, you can predict with reasonable accuracy when the plants will come up, when they will bloom, and how long they will bloom. For instance, with some types of flowers, there's a 90 percent chance that they will come up fifteen to twenty days after the seeds have been planted. In short, the growth of a flower follows a clear predictable pattern, and we call this pattern a life history. But this is the trick with many gambling games. The casino owners want us to believe that dice also have a life history and that we can therefore estimate the probability of events related to the dice. However, gambling *devices* like dice are different because they don't have life histories. Now . . . what do you think that means?

STUDENT 1: There aren't any reliable patterns? Um, just because I rolled a seven last time doesn't tell me anything about the next roll.

TEACHER: Right. You can't look at the past rolls of the dice and predict what the next roll will be. Now many people, especially gamblers, think that they can, but this is what's called the gambler's fallacy. The gambler's fallacy is expecting to roll a seven with a pair of dice because a seven hasn't come up recently. So, in other words, there's a *widespread* belief among gamblers that dice have a life history. In the

real world, that's not a bad way to reason, but in a casino, it's the path to financial loss. Dice have no memory, no life history. Now you *can* predict that if you roll one dice many, many times, the number five will come up about 16 percent of the time. That's one divided by six. But that's not what we're concerned with here. We're concerned with the next roll of the dice. As a result, the element of arbitrariness or randomness makes prediction of the next roll impossible. Statisticians who work with probability theory call the roll of a pair of dice a single-event probability, and many of these same statisticians believe that the probability of a single event can't even be computed mathematically. So, the same probability theory that works well with supermarket lines won't help you win a million dollars in a dice game in Las Vegas. It could, in fact, lead to a *catastrophe*!

So, to sum up, we have looked at three cases involving Murphy's Law and our perception of "bad luck." The first case was the toast, right? Our toast lands buttered-side down far more often than we would predict because the basic laws of physics have a strong effect on normal probabilities. The second case was the supermarket line, remember? Another line moves faster than ours because the laws of probability are behaving normally, even though we might perceive them as behaving unfairly. And the third case was the dice game. People lose at gambling games like dice because the laws of "life history probability" simply don't apply in those situations, even though gamblers think they do.

So, as you can see, in some cases, Murphy's Law is not just some form of bad luck. There are some very real, scientific explanations for these events. OK, that's about it for today. For next class I'd like you to take a look at Chapter 7 and be ready to talk about the discussion questions on page 255. See you then.

Unit 3 Types of Memory

TEACHER: Good morning everyone. Um . . . today, I have the pleasure of introducing you to the basics of what I think is one of the most fascinating topics in the field of psychology—memory. What is memory? How does memory work? The research in this field is fascinating and dates back to the late 1800s, so it's been going on for more than a century. I'll begin today by saying a few things about three types of memory that we all have, and then we'll look at how memory is measured.

All right. First of all, let's begin by looking at types of memory. One of the most common ways to classify memory is based on time . . . based on time and *duration* of use. So typically, memory is divided into three types: sensory memory, working memory (which is also referred to as short-term memory), and long-term memory. Again, that's sensory memory, working memory, and long-term memory.

Let's talk about sensory memory for a minute. Sensory memory holds information for only an instant, say, less than half a second. This is just long enough to register an impression on one or more of our five senses—sight, hearing, touch, smell, or taste. Let me give you an example of a

phenomenon concerning *visual* sensory memory that I'm sure you've all experienced. Imagine that you're holding up a flashlight on a dark night. You start to move it in circles slowly, watching it carefully the whole time. Pretty soon you aren't just seeing the flashlight . . . you can see a full circle of light! Of course, it's actually just one point of light being moved around, but your memory of the visual sensation of the light fills in the rest of the circle. That's one example of sensory memory. So remember, you can hold something in your sensory memory for just a fraction of a second, up to around half a second, then it *fades* away.

Now if you want to keep the information for longer than a second, you have to put it into your working memory. Working memory, the second type of memory, allows us to hold on to things for as long as we think about them, that is, as long as we're paying attention to them. It's something like a kind of *temporary* storage place. Let me give you a simple math problem. Are you ready? Here goes . . . 18 plus 44 plus 9 plus 19. . . I'll say that one more time. OK? 18 plus 44 plus 9 plus 19. . . All right? . . . Do you all have the answer? Maya?

STUDENT 1: Uh, I think it's 90. Yeah, 90.

TEACHER: Let's see . . . 18 plus 44 is 62 . . . plus 9 is 71 . . . plus 19 is 90. Ninety is the answer. Now, to figure out this problem, you had to use your working memory. As you did the problem, you had to continue holding the numbers in your memory until you got the final answer. If you stopped concentrating on the numbers, that is, you stopped saying them to yourself, or stopped visualizing them, you would have forgotten them and then you wouldn't have been able to solve the problem. Do you see how that works?

Here's one more example of working memory involving reading. Look at the sentence: "Honey is the only natural food that is made without destroying any kind of life." It's written down in your textbook. Why, you may wonder, do we need working memory to understand such a simple sentence? Well, the answer is because working memory holds the first part of the sentence, "Honey is the only natural food . . ." while our eyes move on to the last part, that is, "made without destroying any kind of life." Without our working memory, we would forget the first part of the sentence before we got to the end. So reading even short or simple passages would be impossible without our working memory.

OK, I think you can see how important working memory is, but our working memory is very limited, and it can only hold information temporarily. It usually lasts only one and one half to two seconds and then it begins to fade. So if working memory were all we had, we would be very limited. Essentially, working memory mediates between how we experience the environment and our long-term memory. This brings us to the third type of memory that we'll talk about today, long-term memory.

Now, long-term memory is involved with information that's stored for considerable lengths of time. For example, do you remember the name of your best friend when you were ten years old? I bet you do, because this information is certainly in your long-term memory. Actually, memory that's tested after about one minute behaves in a very simi-

lar way to memory tested after a day, a week, or even years, so many scientists believe that any memories more than one minute old are part of our long-term memory. Interestingly, these memories seem to change over time in the sense that we tend to add information to them. In a sense, our memories become *somewhat distorted*. The reason behind these changes is that our memory is designed to keep or preserve meaning, not to keep impressions or images, but to keep meaning. For example, try to remember a conversation you had yesterday with a friend. Now if you're like most people, you can't remember the exact words that you or your friend said, but you can remember the ideas that you discussed. Your memories of the points that were most important to you will be the clearest. So the *essential* feature of long-term memory is that it specializes in holding meaning. OK, are there any questions about that? Yes?

STUDENT 1: Yeah. Can you explain why we don't remember all of the details of our past conversations?

TEACHER: So the question is, "Why do we forget?" Well, most experts believe that if we remembered all of the details of our past experiences, our memory system would be filled with a lot of trivial information, a lot of trivial and generally useless information. Secondly, it is *conceivable* that we would find it extremely difficult to sift through such a . . . a mass of *detailed* information and find the really important information that we need. Um . . . in other words, memory searches would proceed a lot more slowly.

STUDENT 1: OK, I see. Thank you.

TEACHER: OK, let's move on to ways of measuring memory. Just as we *distinguished* three types of memory, there are three main ways of measuring how much a person remembers. The first of these methods is called recall. You use recall many times every day. Here's what I mean. . . . Take out a sheet of paper. . . . OK, now look at the word list in your text: drum, band, studio, and so on. . . . Read it silently to yourself. . . . OK? . . . Have you looked at all of the words? . . . OK, you should be finished by now. Now, close your book. Write down the words you saw, as many as you can, on your paper. . . . Go ahead. . . . OK, that's a simple recall test. Now, most of you probably remembered most of the words, but not all of them. Our memories, of course, are not perfect, and of course forgetting is natural.

The second method of measuring memory is recognition. OK, for this you need another piece of paper, or just turn that one over. . . . All right. Number the page from one to eight. . . . Now look at the word list again. OK, now close your book. I'm going to say eight words. You have to write "yes" or "no"—"yes" if the word I say was on the list, "no" if the word I say was not on the list. Ready? Here I go. 1. studio. 2. guitar. 3. stage. 4. recorder. 5. wiring. 6. song. 7. vocalist. 8. drum. . . . OK, everybody finished? The answers are 1. yes, 2. no, 3. yes, 4. no, 5. yes, 6. no, 7. yes, and 8. yes. . . . How did you do? Anyone get all eight correct? . . . Good! That's what we call a recognition test. In contrast to the recall test, recognition is more receptive and doesn't require you to produce anything. For this reason,

recognition is a lot easier for most of us than recall. In other words, asking yourself "Have I seen this before?" is easier than remembering everything you saw.

Now the third basic method used to measure memory is relearning. Let me give you an example of a relearning test. First, you try to memorize a list of words. Then you don't look at the list for a period of time, maybe a week. If you're like most people, you won't be able to remember all of the words. After a week, you then look at the list a second time and try to relearn it. As you would guess, most people relearn information somewhat faster than they learn it the first time. By measuring the time people need to relearn information, we can *calculate* how much information they have stored in their long-term memories the first time.

So, let's stop there for today. Uh . . . I hope that you'll put today's material in your long-term memory . . . or you're going to have a hard time with the test. See you next week.

Unit 4 Actions Speak Louder than Words

TEACHER: OK, class, OK . . . let's begin. What do we mean when we say that actions speak louder than words?

STUDENT 1: Uh . . . that means we believe people's actions more than we believe their words.

TEACHER: Yes, exactly right—and, uh, in a sense, actions are more important than words. That's because we usually judge speakers' intentions by the nonverbal signals they send us. And that's what our subject today's all about, nonverbal communication—how we communicate through our actions—facial expressions, eye contact, tone of voice, uh, body movement, and so on. And if any of you doubt the importance of these things, you might like to consider a couple of statistics I've got here in front of me. Some communication specialists *estimate* we spend about 75 percent of our waking hours communicating. And, more to the point, words account for only, mm, 10 to 30 percent of that communication—the *bulk's* nonverbal. That's food for thought, uh?

Now although people clearly understand its importance, nonverbal communication—I'll call it N.V.C. for short—is actually a rather recent field of study and owes a lot to an American anthropologist named Raymond Birdwhistle—spelled B-I-R-D-W-H-I-S-T-L-E. Easy name to remember, right? Birdwhistle began studying nonverbal communication in the 1950s and, um . . . one of his main ideas was that the meaning of nonverbal behavior depended on the context in which it was used. . . . Uh, it depends on the context. So, he looked at the whole context of nonverbal behavior—how and, uh, where certain types of nonverbal behavior appeared—and not just one particular behavior in isolation. Facial expressions, for example—frowns, smiles, raised eyebrows, and, uh, so on—we all use these to *convey* many different meanings. But those meanings are largely *determined* by the situations we're in and the relationships that we have with the people we're communicating with. So, the same

expression can have different meanings, right? Take a smile, for example, what does it mean? . . . Uh, Mike?

STUDENT 2: Uh . . . uh, agreement, I guess. "I like you."

TEACHER: OK. Yes, it could mean "I like you," but it could also mean "I'm trying to make you feel comfortable," or maybe, uh, "I think you said something funny." Hmm? The point is, the situation or the relationship between the people involved gives a particular meaning to the smile. All right.

Now although today I want to focus on physical nonverbal communication—uh, often called body language or kinesics, that's K-I-N-E-S-I-C-S—you should know that there are other types of nonverbal communication. G. W. Porter, for example, divides nonverbal communication into four categories, which I'd like to look at just briefly. There's the Physical N.V.C. I just mentioned. That includes facial expressions, tone of voice, sense of touch and smell, and body movement. Secondly, there's Aesthetic N.V.C.—that's A-E-S-T-H-E-T-I-C, meaning related to beauty. And Aesthetic N.V.C. takes place through creative expressions, like playing instrumental music, dancing or painting, sculpting. And we certainly know that we can communicate with people through creative expressions like these.

Now, next is Signs, which is a mechanical type of communication. Now, it includes the use of things like signal flags used at airports, the twenty-one gun salute used in the military, and police sirens used on public streets. And last is Symbolic N.V.C., which uses religious, status, or ego-building symbols—you know, things like wearing crosses in the Christian religion or special pins to show membership in a particular club, like a fraternity. So, again, you've got physical, aesthetic, signs, and symbolic nonverbal communication. Got that?

But let's go back to Porter's first type, Physical N.V.C., or body language . . . Um, it's divided into two main types—static features and *dynamic* features. Static features include distance, orientation, posture, and physical contact. Let's look at distance first. The distance a person stands from another often sends a nonverbal message. In some situations it's a sign of attraction; in others it's a reflection of social status; in others it shows the *intensity* of the exchange. Distance has to do with personal space and what an *invasion* of someone's personal space signifies, what it means. Britney?

STUDENT 1: Yes, what is personal space exactly? Could you explain it a bit more, please?

TEACHER: Ah, well, good question. Well, it's kind of like a bubble each of us places between ourself and others—an invisible border or limit. Now this affects how close we stand to others, where we sit in a room, at a meeting, and uh, so on—things which affect how comfortable we feel. Generally speaking, the higher your status, the more space you'll have and the easier it'll be to invade other people's space. Uh, I hope that's clearer.

Now, orientation's different from distance and has to do with the way we position ourselves in relation to others. For example, people cooperating are likely to sit side-by-side, while competitors are likely to sit face to face . . . right? And posture's different again; it concerns whether we're slouched

or we're standing or sitting straight. You know: Are our legs crossed, our arms folded? That sort of thing. These convey the level of formality or relaxation in the same situation.

Then comes physical contact, and here we're talking about touching, holding, hugging, and so on. These convey or show messages—particularly how intimate we feel—and their meaning can vary a lot between cultures. Hands touching in one culture may be an act of great intimacy, whereas in another . . . simply a sign of friendship. The fact is, though, that touching and physical intimacy can send a more direct yet subtle message than dozens of words. Be careful though: This kind of communication can easily invade someone's personal space, and that can . . . lead, uh . . . cause mistrust, lead to problems—and actually shut down the communication.

So those are Porter's static features. Let's now look at his dynamic features. These are basically things like facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, and uh, body movements. Facial expressions, then . . . these continually change during a conversation, and participants constantly watch and respond to each others' expressions. These expressions usually communicate the emotions and *attitude* of the speaker. Take eyes for example; they . . . Well, let me ask you, what do *you* think they reveal? Yes?

STUDENT 2: Um . . . happiness and sadness?

TEACHER: Fear? Fright?

STUDENT 3: Friendliness.

TEACHER: Yes, some of these things are revealed in the eyes, happiness and sadness yes . . . also fright and surprise. Think about it. Think about how your eyes respond when you hear something surprising, or frightening, or sad, or cheerful. Now, the lower face—the mouth and jaw—also reveals happiness or surprise, especially the smile, as we've said. The upper face, eyebrows, and forehead can also reveal anger. In some communication studies, it's been estimated that facial expressions provide 55 percent of the meaning of a message; vocal cues, such as pitch and volume, provide 38 percent; and verbal cues only 7 percent. So, a person's expressions seem to be a better indicator of his meaning than words, which play a *minimal* part.

OK, now where are we? Oh. We're looking at Porter's dynamic features of communication. Next we come to gestures. You know, one of the most important parts of gesturing, hand movements, is one of those least understood by scientists. Most are not universal, and as we all know, the same gesture can have different meanings in different countries. Here in the U.S. we make a circle with our thumb and first finger and it means "OK." In Japan, however, it means "money," and in South America it has a sexual meaning. The story goes that former President Richard Nixon made a huge mistake on a trip to South America when he held up both hands using this "OK." gesture. Needless to say, the people in the audience were quite shocked! The fact is, we have to be very careful about what our bodies are saying . . . especially when in a different culture.

Now let's move on to eye contact. Eye contact is a very powerful form of nonverbal communication. One thing

about eye contact that is generally agreed on is that someone with higher status usually maintains eye contact longer if he's talking to someone of lower status. In other words, he stares. Anything else you think a direct stare indicates?

STUDENT 1: Determination . . . uh . . . openness.

TEACHER: Exactly, and it creates a feeling of trust. And looking downward?

STUDENT 1: That shows dishonesty, guilt, . . . uh . . .

TEACHER: Yes, it does, but also modesty, in some cases. And eyes rolled upwards suggest tiredness. I don't see any of that right now, I'm glad to say!

And the last, the fourth item on Porter's list is body movement. You know, it's interesting that a lot of the work on nonverbal communication has been done for corporations. They want to improve their employees' performance. So for example, if you lean forward in an interview, this suggests you're energetic, somebody prepared to make major changes. If you hold yourself at your tallest, uh, this suggests you're probably a presenter, and good at selling yourself or the organization. And with side-to-side movements, if you take up a lot of space while talking by moving your arms a lot, you're seen as a good informer and listener, so you're desirable to the company. See?

So to finish up, I'm going to list five things that *differentiate* verbal and nonverbal communication. I'd like you to note them down. First, while spoken languages differ from country to country, emotions are communicated in much the same nonverbal way throughout the world. Second, although we know a lot about the grammar of spoken language, we still don't know very much about the "grammar" of N.V.C. Third, we don't have any dictionaries for N.V.C. If you go to a foreign country and somebody makes a hand gesture you don't understand, there's no dictionary to help you. And fourth, we can ask for repetition or *clarification* of what somebody has said, but it's practically impossible to ask, "Could you repeat that smile?" or "What does that facial expression mean?" We have to understand nonverbal communication the first time around. And finally, we can hide our true feelings with spoken language, but it's more difficult with N.V.C. We can't just stop ourselves from turning red, or slow down our heartbeat, right? So whether we like it or not, body language can't lie—although I'll bet there are times we all wish it could.

So in conclusion then, nonverbal communication is an *integral* part of communication. OK, now let's quickly get into groups and talk about some of the differences I've just mentioned. This is what I want you to do. Just pull your chairs around. . . .

Unit 5 Marriage: Traditions and Trends

TEACHER: Good afternoon, class. Today I'd like to talk about a subject which is probably going to be very important in your future; for many of you at least—marriage. Marriage, as you probably know, has been with the human

race for thousands of years. And, although some would say that the institution of marriage has come under attack in recent decades, marriage isn't going to disappear anytime soon. We're going to start today by looking at some definitions of marriage. Then, we'll consider the selection of a marriage partner, a critical decision that—you will see—has been handled very differently by different cultures. We'll see that how societies handle this question has changed in recent decades, and this change is having a strong impact on marriage in today's world.

OK. So what is marriage? This may seem like a simple question, but not every society answers it in the same way. Generally, we can describe marriage as a more or less durable union between one or more men and one or more women that is sanctioned by society. I know that's long, so let me repeat it. Marriage is a more or less durable union . . . between one or more men . . . and one or more women . . . that is sanctioned by, that is accepted by, society. All right? Now the words "sanctioned by society" are an important part of this definition because social approval is what distinguishes marriage from other relationships between adults. A second important point is that the *obligations* between partners—or the responsibilities that the partners have toward each other—are specified in marriages. Now what do you think might be an example of a marriage obligation? What are married people expected to do? Yes, Monica.

STUDENT 1: To take care of your marriage partner. . . .

TEACHER: Good. Anything else?

STUDENT 2: Uh . . . to take care of the children. . . .

TEACHER: Absolutely. Those are the main ones. So one obligation is to provide care for the children and provide them with an acceptable position in society. Now this definition of marriage says that marriage is a licensing of parenthood. OK, just what do we mean by that? A licensing of parenthood means it allows people to become parents. Now in most societies, the key has traditionally been having acceptable social fatherhood. This is called "social fatherhood" because traditionally the father is supposed to be responsible for ensuring the, uh . . . the social development of the child. Some people say, though, that this task has more often fallen to the mother. In addition, nowadays, some people prefer to use a term such as "social parenthood" and do away with the gender bias of the traditional term. . . . I, I see a question. Go ahead.

STUDENT 3: I'm a little confused by what you mean by social fatherhood or social parenthood. Could you explain more about that?

TEACHER: Sure. How about an example? Maybe that would make the idea clearer. In many countries, children can be adopted. Now in those cases, the adoptive parents are not the actual birth mother and father.

STUDENT 3: OK, so the people who adopt the child become the social mother and social father.